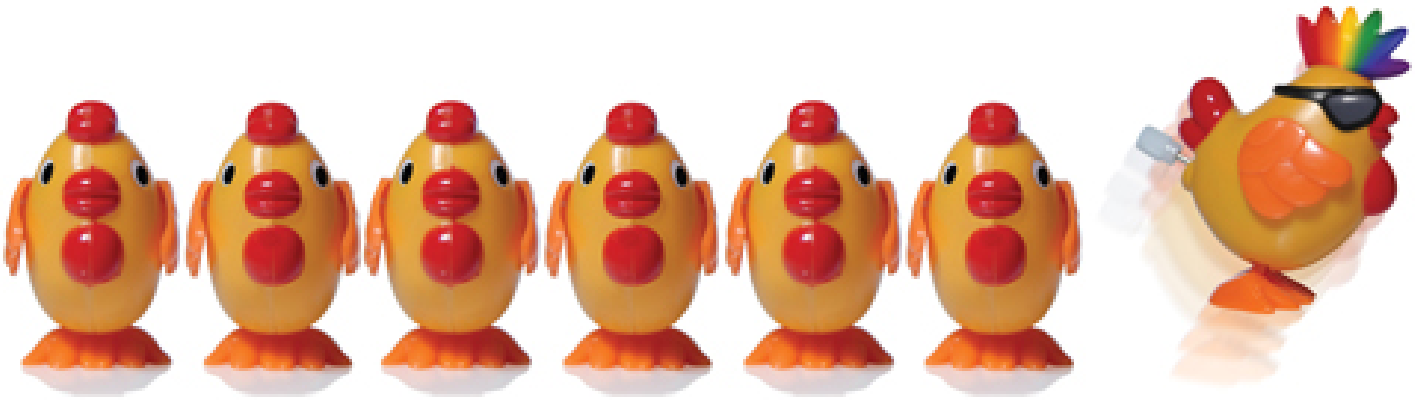
A Companion eBook

# *Personality not included

## The Personal Branding Edition



## An Essential Guide To Building Your Personal Brand Online

by Rohit Bhargava

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# * Why It's Free …

**This is the "gift with purchase" … without the purchase.** If you have found this ebook, chances are you are coming from one of two places. The first is that you might have seen a mention of this guide in my book, ***Personality Not Included*** – and the second is that you heard about it from someone or followed a link online. Either way, thanks for choosing to download it and start seeing how personality can help you and your career.

Personality is a big idea – and one that will change the way that businesses approach their marketing in the coming months and years, as well as transform how each of us approach our own careers. Technology and the evolution of the Internet make our humanity more transparent and important to getting and keeping customers, or finding and excelling in the perfect job. In short, *personality matters* more than it ever has and it can be the key to your success. The aim of this ebook is to offer you a useful guide on building your personal brand.

Please share it with a friend, colleague or family member and feel free to send me a personal email at rohitaustralia@gmail.com to let me know what you thought of it. One last note, if you liked the ideas in this ebook there are lots more in ***Personality Not Included,*** so pick up a copy or tell someone about the book today. Not only would I really appreciate it, but it's also extremely good karma for you. Trust me, I'm Indian.

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# * Introduction

**In the social media era, branding yourself is no longer optional.** The big idea I wrote about in *Personality Not Included* was that brands need to have a personality. In most cases, that personality comes from a collection of individuals, like you. Whether you work for a company or have your own business, your personal brand is your identity and it is increasingly going digital. You may only have an email address, or you may belong to every social network in the Web2.0 world. Regardless of which end of the digital rainbow you fit, your personal brand is going to be increasingly important as you move through your life. In fact, I would argue it is more important now than ever before. Why?

Here are just a few reasons why building your personal brand online is the most important piece of career planning you can do:

- ✓ **Offers you real independence.** Whether you are in a great job, or seeking a new role, having a personal brand means that if you do need or want to change jobs, you have a reputation that exists outside of your job title.
- ✓ **Makes you more indispensible.** A more powerful personal brand can help you become more important at work. Companies rarely fire superstars, so even if your company is cutting people – you'll be the last to go.
- ✓ **Gives you more credibility.** Having a strong personal brand can often help you to walk into a new situation without needing to spend much time introducing

yourself. The more people know about you before you walk in the door, the better – because you can spend less time telling them why they should bother listening to you, and more time focusing on what you can do *for* them.

✓**Let's you earn/charge more money.** The simple fact of having a strong personal brand is that it gives you a higher profile and personal reputation … which in turn often lets you charge more for what you do and make more money.

Aside from these core benefits, there are many other reasons to focus on your personal brand. In my case, it has led to a book deal with McGraw-Hill, many connections with people around the world that I would never have otherwise met, and media appearances in *The Wall Street Journal*, *BusinessWeek, PRWeek, MarketingChinas* and many other publications worldwide. If you focus on building your own personal brand, you can set yourself up to stand apart and achieve your own goals for career success too. Let's get started!

# I. Give Good Google

**No matter what you want to do online**, the first step should always be the same. You need to understand where you are starting from and what's currently out there and that requires research. For most of us, the place to start is with Google, since it is the largest search engine by far when it comes to volume.* Your first goal on Google is to answer the key question: What are people finding online about me?

To do this, you need to conduct your own "online visibility audit." The point of this audit is to quickly understand what people are finding when they Google you (in other words – do you give good Google?). This will also give you a sense of any current perceptions about you which you may need to correct or change. In order to conduct your online visibility audit, follow these four steps:

- ✓ **Step 1:** Establish a set of keywords to use for searching (these should include your name, your company and relevant industry/subject matter keywords).
- ✓ **Step 2:** Use a mix of Google properties to conduct your search (top properties to consider are Google News, Google Images, Google Blogsearch, Google Video, and general search).
- ✓ **Step 3:** Expand your search off Google (good tools to use today include Flickr (for images), YouTube (for video), Twitter (for microblogging) and Facebook.

** This depends on where you are in the world, of course. If you're in a part of the world where Google isn't the leader, go with the most popular site in your region.*

Once again, depending on your region, you may want to add other international sites to this list as well.

✓ **Step 4:** Compile list and record your results and current visibility.

Once you have completed an audit and looked at some of the things out there, you will likely find yourself in one of four categories*:

| | |
|---|---|
| **UNBRANDED + VISIBLE**<br>**(Visible but lacking message)**<br>**This will be the most common situation, where there are search results about you, but they don't fit together and you have not built a strong personal brand … yet.** | **BRANDED PERSONALITY**<br>**(Visible and strong brand)**<br>**This is where you want to be, when you are visible for searches on your name, and you have successfully defined what you stand for.** |
| **INVISIBLE**<br>**(Invisible and no brand)**<br>**This is the Google equivalent of a clean slate, where you don't have much content online about you, and relatively little information.** | **DOPPLEGANGER**<br>**(Invisible due to competition)**<br>**This is the tough situation where your name is well defined, for someone else who shares it, and you are invisible** |

As we move ahead, we'll talk about how to build your personal brand online regardless of which category you are – but knowing your base point is the big first step. The next step is building a foundation for your personal brand by defining your brand and creating a platform for it online.

### Action Steps From This Section:

- ✓ Define your list of keywords
- ✓ Conduct a visibility audit using Google and other tools
- ✓ Record your results and determine which category you fall into

** Actually, there is a fifth category, which is when there are lots of people who hate you talking about how much they hate you. That's a more rare situation and requires more effort and a much more involved approach, so I don't cover that here. If you're in that situation, I suggest getting some professional help and advice.*

# II. Establish a Platform

**Your platform is the foundation of your personal brand.** It is what you stand for and how you position yourself. In the book, I call this your "mantra." The idea of creating a mantra (or platform) is mostly about positioning: what do you want people to think of when they see your name?

The platform I have chosen for myself is a combination of my name, and the theme of "inspiring influential marketing." My blog is called "influential marketing" and if you Google that term, the first several search results will point to my blog. I also rank first for my name (which many of you are probably thinking couldn't have been that hard – since it is somewhat unique). Actually, there is a bioengineering professor at the University of Illinois who is remarkably well published and had virtually all the web hits for my name several years ago. Which leads me to the discussion of a concept I introduced in the last section of the *Doppleganger*.

A Google Doppleganger is something that comes up in virtually all Google search results for your name. In most cases it is someone else who shares your name, but could also be a place or brand. So, if your name happens to be Robert Scoble or Georgio Armani and you are not *the* Scoble or Armani – are you out of luck? Yes and no. It doesn't make sense to try and compete with a prominent Doppleganger, so the better solution is to find an alternative. Essentially, there are two models for building your platform and countering a prominent doppleganger:

- ✓ **Come up with a new name.** When David Meerman Scott, author of The New Rules of Marketing & PR was faced with having to promote himself among the many David Scotts out there, he chose to use his middle name consistently. It may not work for everyone, but in David's case, it gave him a far more unique and ownable key search term for his name.
- ✓ **Create a persona.** The alternative to modifying your name is to create a persona around it. RSS Ray (aka Brian Offenberger), host of an internet radio talk show all about online marketing has made this choice. He uses his persona to promote his personal brand and the brand of his show – and it is recognizable and ownable in search results.

Your name or persona alone, however, is not your personal brand – it is just one part of it. Having that alone, while offering valuable search criteria, will not usually tell people who you are or what you stand for. Focusing just on that will also not help you to be visible for a particular subject area either. To do that, you need to create an ownable position.

### Your Ownable Position

Defining your personal brand in a professional sense is all about choosing the right niche that you can own. In my case, I didn't go after all of marketing, I started my blog as "influential interactive marketing" and later revised it to just "influential marketing." The best ownable position is something that is unique, targeted enough to stand out, as well as something you are passionate about. The passion is important, because as long as you choose something that you like, it will be much easier to build it into your personal brand – and it will come through as authentic to others.

Once you have this, you need to translate it into an online destination. Building a

destination is partially about what you stand for … but it also involves the actual activity of creating a site as a destination. If you already have a website or blog, you have a good start and thinking your personal brand through may require some rebranding or rethinking of your current brand. In either case, there are a few key criteria you need to look at:

- ✓ **Domain Name.** Don't be fooled into thinking all the good domain names are gone. When it comes to choosing one for your personal brand, the important thing is to have one includes either your name or your ownable position as part of the URL. This not only impacts how easy it is to remember, it also matters when it comes to ranking for search results.
- ✓ **Ubiquity.** It will be very difficult to have an ownable position if you select a term or topic that has too much competition. Think about what the unique element of a common area is that you an find a niche within. Guy Kawasaki has a blog and has written many books about entrepreneurship – yet he called his blog "How to Change the World." It's unique and memorable, like Guy himself.
- ✓ **Blog or Site?** Having a great personal brand is not all about starting a blog, though it can often help. If you don't feel that you can afford the time to keep a blog up to date or have other concerns about blogging, check out my collection of blogging tips and resources referenced below.* If blogging still doesn't seem like it is for you, then at the least you will need to create a site as destination which has information about you. This could be your social media bio, which we will talk about in the next section – or just a web page or social networking profile, as long as you can aggregate all the different sites where you have a presence together.

** Blogging Resources - http://www.personalitynotincluded.com/bloggingadvice*

## Prepare for tagging with a standard convention

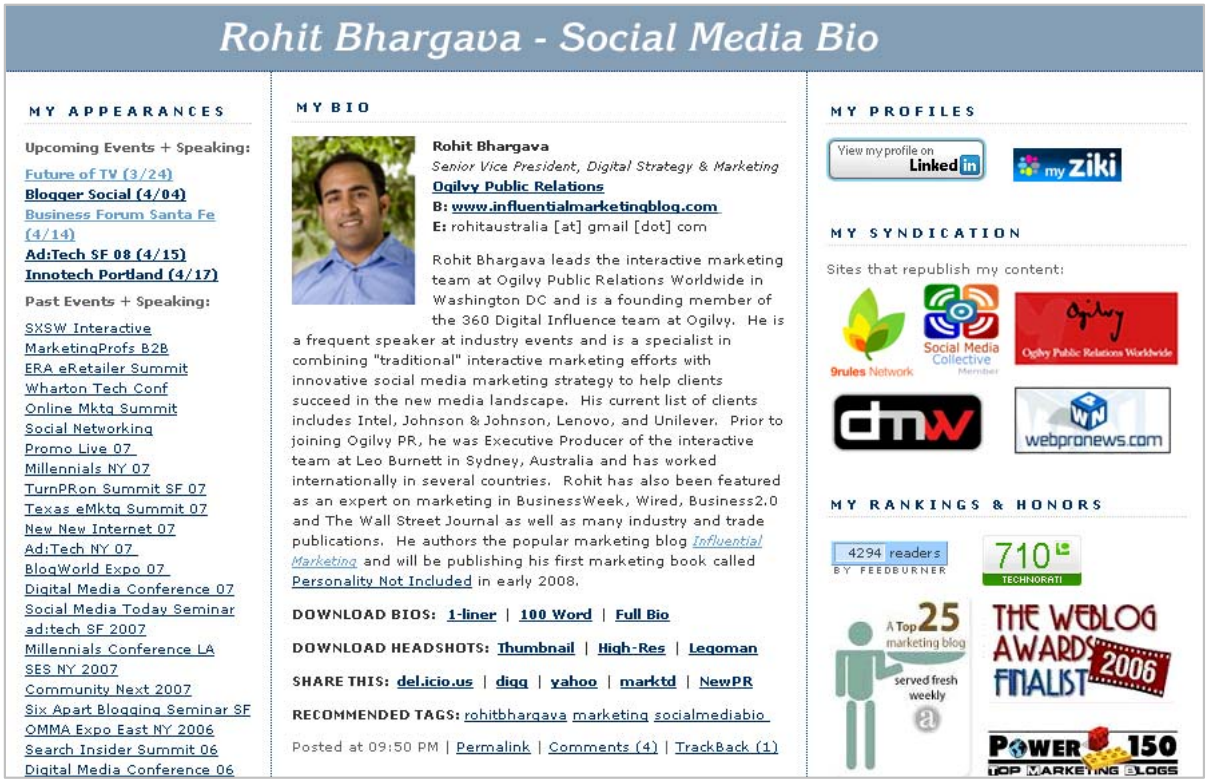
Alongside creating the right destinations and identifying your brand, it is the right time to come up with your "naming conventions" that you will use consistently across the Internet. It is important to define a convention and stick to it so that all your efforts to build your personal brand will be linked together. Naming conventions mean the terms that you use to identify your own content or accounts online as well as what others will use. For example, the tag I use for all my content is my full name "rohitbhargava." This is usually my username on new sites that I join, and I also use this to tag photos, content and any videos posted which include me. I also encourage others to use it, and many will use it by default because it is intuitive. For my blog, I use "influentialmarketing" and for the book, it's "personalitynotincluded" or "pnibook."

The point is, make your tags descriptive, obvious and consistent. This will matter more and more as the trend of the "semantic web" (an Internet that is organized by the efforts of individuals rather than the power of algorithms) continues to move toward reality. Already on top social media sites like Digg, Flickr, Twitter, and many others … these tags are the currency that people use to find information and connect with one another.

## Action Steps From This Section:

- ✓ Choose a name or persona
- ✓ Create your platform and mantra
- ✓ Decide on and launch an online presence
- ✓ Select a series of tags to use consistently online

# III. Create a Social Media Bio




**More than a year ago, I first created a social media bio.** A replacement for the About page that came with my blog, the social media bio was a much more detailed combination of all my contact information and background. Over time, several others adopted this idea and refined it to their own purposes. What each of them uncovered is that there is a better way to explain yourself online than a single bio paragraph, or a link to a document of your resume. No matter if you happen to already have your own blog or are just setting up your online presence, the social media bio offers a template

you may want to consider.

Below are a list of the types of information that you could include:

- ✓ **My Bio.** A narrative description of your background. You may want to make this available in multiple lengths (long – 500 words, short – 100 words, one line version)
- ✓ **My Headshots.** Important if you plan to do any speaking or media appearances, make sure you have multiple resolution versions of your headshot for easy downloading and availability.
- ✓ **My Sites.** If you have multiple sites, including a blog or several blogs, include a list of all your site URLs so people can find them easily.
- ✓ **My Networks.** List all the social networks you belong to and your username for each. This lets people connect to you more easily.
- ✓ **My Profiles.** List all the profiles you have created on other sites – this relates to the network list, but may be different if you consider specific sites where you just have a profile page different from social networks you belong to.
- ✓ **My Expertise.** If you have published articles, created pages featuring your expertise on community sites like Work.com or Squidoo, created Wikipedia entries, or posted reviews online – this would be a category to link to all that.
- ✓ **My Photos.** This could either be a link to photos you have published online, or an aggregation of photos where you are featured on an existing photo site.
- ✓ **My Videos.** This could be a collection of favourite videos on a site like YouTube, or videos that you have uploaded and shared online.

- ✓ **My Appearances.** Your schedule for events that you will either be attending or speaking at. This gives visitors to your social media bio an idea of where you will be and where they may be able to meet you.
- ✓ **My Contact Info.** This could include email information, or full contact details such as address and phone. You should make sure to have at least one way that people can get in touch with you – and make this as prominent as possible on your page.

This list is just an initial guide to the types of information you could include in your social media bio. Ultimately, the point is to treat this page as a snapshot of all your activity and content online.

### A Word About Privacy

When publishing this type of information about yourself online, it is important to decide beforehand how much information you are comfortable sharing. There are obvious risks to publishing too much information about yourself online and only you can decide what is a reasonable amount for you. From a financial point of view, most online security experts will tell you that you should never share your real address or birth date online, as well as any sensitive account information – so keep your credit card numbers and Social Security Number off your social media bio page.

### Action Steps From This Section:

- ✓ Select a platform you will use to build your social media bio
- ✓ Decide on the categories of information you will include
- ✓ Consider privacy and don't publish too much personal data
- ✓ Launch your social media bio

# IV. Build & Extend Your Network

**If you think of your personal brand as a pyramid, so far we have talked about the base.** Now that you have created your presence and defined what you want your personal brand to be, it's time to extend your network and create more links back to it as well as help it travel beyond the Internet. To start, you need to build a map of your personal brand online.

### Map your social graph

Chances are, you already belong to several networks and sites. In fact, over time you have probably created many profiles without considering that they all can add to your personal brand. When you created an Amazon account, for example, you have a profile associated with it. Your university alumni network has a profile that may have been prepopulated for you. And your Facebook profile is part of this picture as well. Most of us have dozens of profiles online, and don't even realize it. Each of these add to what is now commonly called your "social graph" – which simply refers to the collection of sites that you belong to and share your personal information on as well as the content that you create and your network online. Each of these is an opportunity for you to extend your personal brand – as long as you can get them to all work together.

The first step is to catalog all these sites. To find them, you may need to use a combination of brainstorming and searching through your email archive for keywords

that could bring up confirmation emails you received when registering for these sites (such as "username" or "confirmation"). Once you know what these sites are, divide them into those that you use frequently and those that are relatively dormant. Now you're ready for the next step.

### Aggregate Your Existing Profiles

On all the sites that you use often, your main goal should be to achieve some level of consistency in how you are portraying yourself. This doesn't mean you need to have exactly the same details on every site – but it does mean that you should try to describe yourself, your background and your personal interests in a way that match with the positioning and mantra that you came up with for yourself. In some cases, this may simply mean updating your bio on those sites that you already use. In other cases you may need to modify the design, templates, backgrounds or other changeable aspects of your profile to match how you are positioning your personal brand.

### Purge & Create New Profiles

For those sites that you don't use very often, the easiest solution may be to delete your old accounts and create new ones. This may be your only choice if you want to create all of your accounts with the same username, something I highly recommend for consistency and because it can impact search results as well. A part of this activity will be to find new sites that you may want to join and create a new profile on. This can be very challenging because every day there are new "2.0" sites launched and no one could possibly be expected to keep up with every one. Generally, the best approach to this, unless you spend the majority of your life online and consider yourself an "early adopter" is to adopt an approach that is known in business lingo as a "smart follower." This simply means that you join new sites and create a profile as soon as you see a critical mass of your friends or online network start to join and use that site.

## Extend Your Brand Offline

Though much of the focus of this ebook is on using online tools to build your personal brand, it is important not to forget that there is much you can do to extend your personal brand offline as well. First among these is integrating your personal brand into how you define yourself in real situations. This means everything from listing your website URL on your business card, to thinking about how you introduce yourself in social settings.

What you do in real life situations will go far to helping you build your personal brand. Attend conferences, participate in local business gatherings and meetups. Every chance you get, try to meet more people and extend your network. And once you do, follow up with them online and connect there as well.

### Action Steps From This Section:

- ✓ Create a map of your social graph
- ✓ Bring your existing profiles together and make them tell a single story
- ✓ Get rid of old profiles and create new ones
- ✓ Extend your brand offline in real life situtions

# V. Integrate With Your Business

**As your personal brand starts to grow, you will need to find a balance for it with your job.** Whether you own your own business, or work for someone else in a day job – your personal brand can create great opportunities for you to do your job better, but can also create some complications with your boss and coworkers. The main issue you will likely run into is how to manage building your personal brand, and promoting the brand that you work for. Done right, this can make you an indispensible member of a team or a highly successful entrepreneur. The negative side is the potential to be seen as nothing more than a self promoter and someone only concerned with themselves. Here's how you can make sure you head on the right track with your personal brand building efforts:

### Step 1: Share Your Affiliation

The best place to start is by being very public with your affiliation and who you work for. Whether it is intentional or not, you are a spokesperson for your company. In the book, I call this the phenomenon of the "accidental spokesperson" … someone who ends up associated with a brand even though they are not officially sanctioned as the spokesperson. I realize this can cause serious issues with most large companies who have a PR and communications department set up specifically to police this sort of situation. I work with many companies like this. But as you build your personal brand, the best way to treat your affiliation is to be up front and honest about it. In

some cases, this may mean that you also share a disclaimer that you are not authorized to speak on behalf of your company. Regardless, it's important that people visiting any of your sites or profiles online can easily find out who you work for.

### Step 2: Offer tangible results

There are many ways that you can leverage your personal brand to get results for your business. Here are a few:

1. **Bring in new business opportunities.** This can be the most concrete of ways to demonstrate value from your personal brand. Nothing silences critics more than hard results like winning a new project or selling some product.

2. **Improve reputation.** A softer, but still important effect of your personal brand can be helping the reputation of your company. Part of this is demonstrating online that you (and by extension the company you work for) is listening to consumer opinions and participating in conversations and communities.

3. **Build relationships.** One of the best assets you can help to build for your company is relationships with influencers and consumers. These will be invaluable when it comes to collecting opinions and feedback or spreading the word about a new product or service launch.

### Step 3: Sell The Value To Your Stakeholders

The last step is to sell the value of your personal brand to your key stakeholders. These may include your boss, your business partners or your colleagues. In each case, you need to be able to demonstrate how your personal brand is having a positive impact on the things they care about – making money or doing your business better. Luckily, the first two steps will have prepared you to tell this story.

**Action Steps From This Section:**

- ✓ Make sure that you share your affiliation openly
- ✓ Focus on tangible results and know which one you are aiming for
- ✓ Collect examples of success to build a case
- ✓ Demonstrate the value of your personal brand to your stakeholders

# VI. Promote Your Brand

**Having a strong personal brand won't mean much if no one ever sees it.** That's why the last section of this ebook is dedicated to what could perhaps be the most important element of your personal brand – spreading the word about it. This will initially seem like a difficult thing to do, because to some degree it means talking about yourself – which most people don't do very well. But in this section you'll see several tips for how to build your own personal profile without spending every moment telling people how great you are. The most successful personal brand builders are the ones who let their reputations develop from their actions and have others spread the word about them. That's what you should aim for as well. Here's how to do it.

### Create Content

To support your positioning, you need to do more than build a few profiles online. You'll need to create some real content that supports how you are trying to position yourself. Often called "thought leadership" – this refers to the idea of creating original content that shares a distinct point of view. Depending on the industry that you work in, this can be anything from an industry specific blog, to a series of videos uploaded to YouTube, to a white paper on a particular topic. Even posting reviews of great places for tourists to go in your town if you are a local restaurateur can help to build your reputation through creating content.

## Add Value

Besides just creating content, you can build your personal brand by consistently adding value within the communities you belong to. This means being part of the conversation taking place on social networks. Or answering people's questions that they pose within a community. Any way that you choose to participate, the more you can do for others to have a useful voice within a group, the more you can continue to demonstrate what you stand for.

One good way to do this is to actively monitor certain keywords that people are using in online conversations. These keywords should relate to your mantra and positioning. You can do things like conduct search engine searches or set up Google Alerts to get an automated email when any of your keywords are mentioned online. Once someone posts content on something related to your concentration, comment on their content, or answer their question, or introduce yourself and make a connection. All are valid ways to add value to conversations and grow your personal brand.

## Make it shareable

The last element of promoting your personal brand is to help it spread beyond what you personally need to impact. The best situation for your personal brand is when others start to recommend you and talk about what you are doing without your asking them to or even having a direct relationship with them. This will most often be a result of your focus on the first two points in this section, but along with that you want to be sure that people can easily pass along information about you by offering prominent links online to connect with you, easy links to your content, and a consistent focus on the tags that bring all this together.

**Action Steps From This Section:**

- ✓ Create content to demonstrate thought leadership
- ✓ Add value to communities you belong to
- ✓ Make your voice shareable